

Cluster B Personality Disorders

Personality disorders are associated with ways of thinking and feeling about oneself and others that significantly and adversely affect how an individual functions in many aspects of life. The essential features of a personality disorder are impairments in personality (self and interpersonal) functioning and the presence of pathological personality traits. (American Psychiatric Association)

There are four Cluster B personality disorders:

- Antisocial
- Borderline
- Narcissistic
- Histrionic

Antisocial Personality Disorder

Antisocial personality disorder is a “pervasive pattern of disregard for, and violation of, the rights of others that begins in early childhood or early adolescence and continues into adulthood” (DSM-5).

People with antisocial personality disorder have been described as lacking empathy, which is the ability to “put yourself in someone else’s shoes” in order to understand their feelings.

These individuals often act irresponsibly, lie, steal, or repeatedly break the law. Antisocial personality disorder is also linked to impulsive behavior, aggression (such as repeated physical assaults), disregard for one’s own or others’ safety, and lack of remorse.

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

BPD is associated with specific problems in interpersonal relationships, self-image, emotions, behaviors, and thinking.

People with BPD tend to have unstable, intense relationships with conflict, many arguments, and frequent break-ups. They fear being abandoned. They often have a negative image of themselves, and they report many “ups and downs” in how they feel about themselves. They may say they feel as if they’re on an emotional roller coaster with very quick shifts in mood, such as going from feeling OK to depressed within a few minutes.

People with BPD often engage in risky behaviors, such as going on shopping sprees, drinking excessive amounts of alcohol or abusing drugs, engaging in promiscuous sex, binge eating, or self-harming (e.g., cutting themselves or threatening or attempting suicide).

Narcissistic Personality Disorder

An inflated sense of self-importance is the key feature of narcissistic personality disorder. Those affected often believe they’re “special,” more important than others, and entitled to special treatment. They require excessive attention, take advantage of others, lack empathy, and are seen as arrogant.

People with narcissistic personality disorder also exaggerate their achievements and fantasize about being powerful, attractive, and successful. They have no interest in others’ feelings and needs, but

they do have unreasonable expectations of what others should do for them. Sometimes they envy others, but they often believe they are envied.

Histrionic Personality Disorder

The central features of histrionic personality disorder are intense, dramatic expressions of emotion that shift rapidly and excessive, attention-seeking behavior.

People with histrionic personality disorder constantly seek attention and are uncomfortable when others are receiving it. They may engage in dramatic, seductive, or sexually provocative behavior or use their physical appearance to draw attention to themselves. Additional features include:

- Relationships that are not as strong as the person thinks they are
- Shallow, rapidly shifting emotions
- Strong, dramatic statements of opinion
- The tendency to be easily influenced by others

Sources:

American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-5. Fifth Edition. American Psychiatric Association: 2013.

MayoClinic.org. Personality disorders. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/personality-disorders/basics/symptoms/con-20030111>.